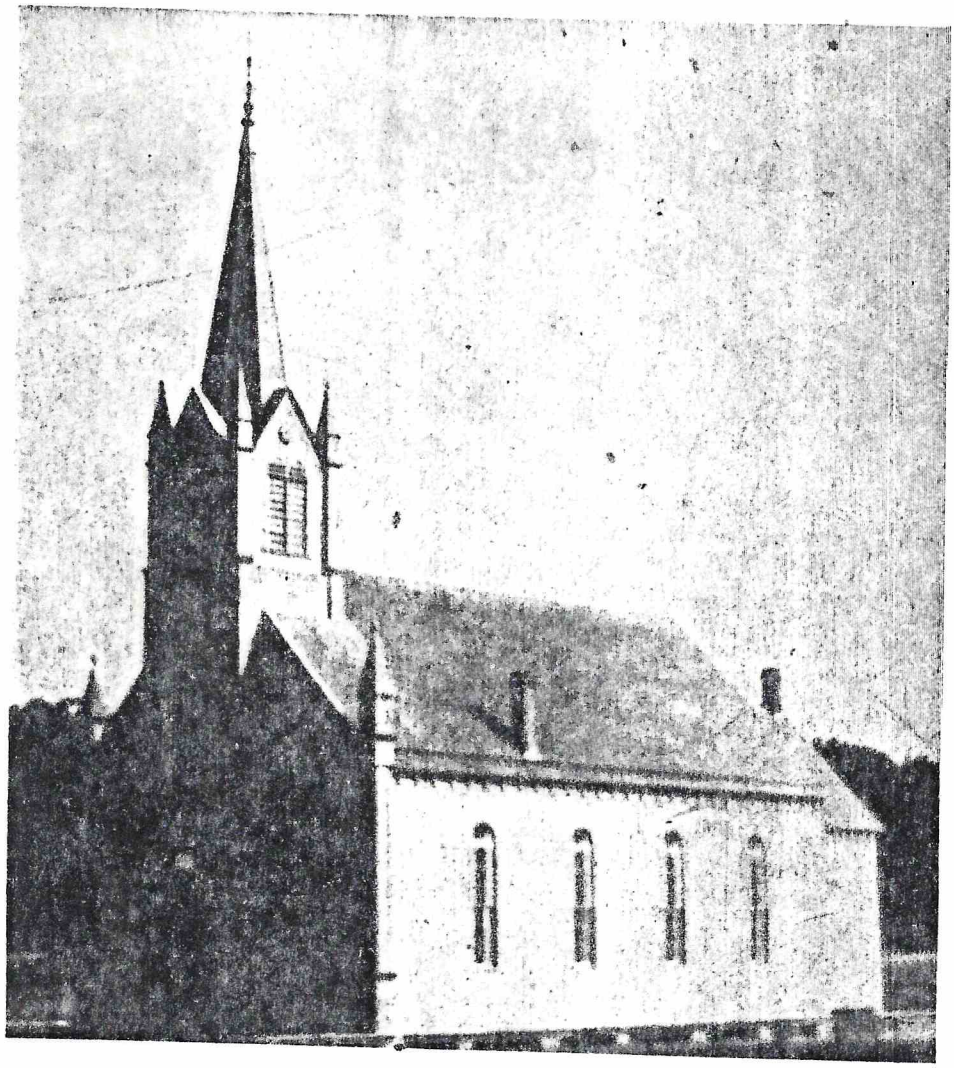


TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

CONANT, ILLINOIS

1897 - 1972

75th Anniversary

PRAISE THE LORD!

Trinity Lutheran Church

CONANT, ILLINOIS

Historical Sketch and Souvenir

PREPARED FOR THE

75th Anniversary

OF ITS EXISTENCE

BY

The Committee and

Pastor Bickel

In the mid 1800's the United States experienced mass imigration from Germany. Thousands of people including many Lutherans came to a new land that promised freedom and better living opportunities. In 1847 fifteen congregations of German Lutherans became charter members of the organization now known as the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. Trinity Lutheran Church of Conant, Illinois, a member of this synod which this year celebrates 125 years of God's mercy, gives thanks to God for its own 75 years of blessings.

In the spring of 1897 the members of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Lost Prairie, Illinois were divided on the question concerning the location of a new and larger church building. While the majority of the members agreed to build on the existing church property, a small group of families living near Conant wanted the building nearer their homes. Since the two groups could not agree, on March 16, 1897, men identifying with the sentiments of the Conant families met to determine their course of action. These men decided to form a new congregation and to build a church in the Conant vicinity. This important meeting marked the birth of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Conant, Illinois.

The same men who attended this meeting later became Trinity's charter members. They were: E. F. Brune; J. G. Beck, Jr.; George Beck, Sr.; Albert Kraft; Henry J. Wagner; John F. Brune; A. F. Beck; Herman Roethe; Martin Mayer, Jr.; George F. Brune; Henry Schrader; Michael Mayer and Fred J. Beck.

E. F. BRUNE

J. G. BECK, Jr.

GEORGE BECK, Sr.

ALBERT KRAFT

HENRY J. WAGNER

JOHN F. BRUNE

A. F. BECK

HERMAN ROETHE

MARTIN MAYER, Jr.

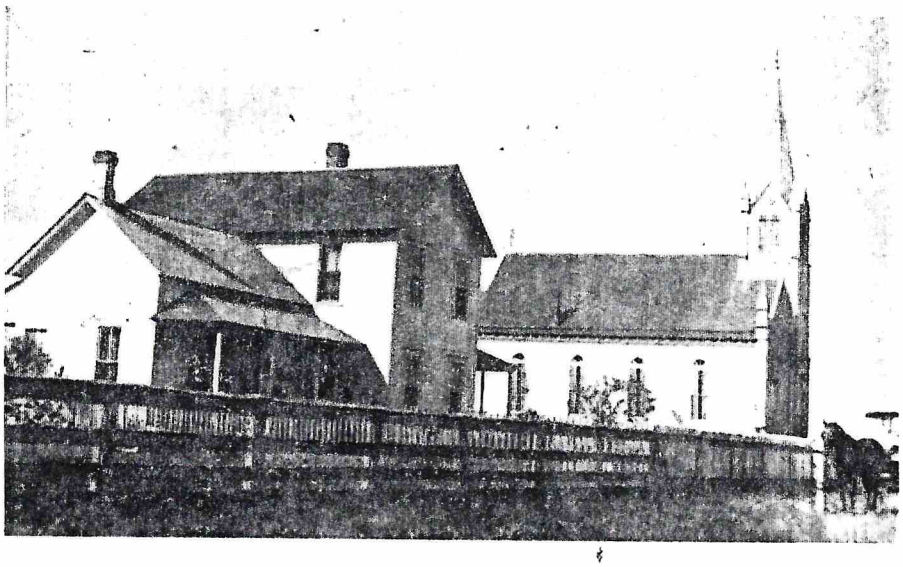
GEORGE F. BRUNE

HENRY SCHRADER

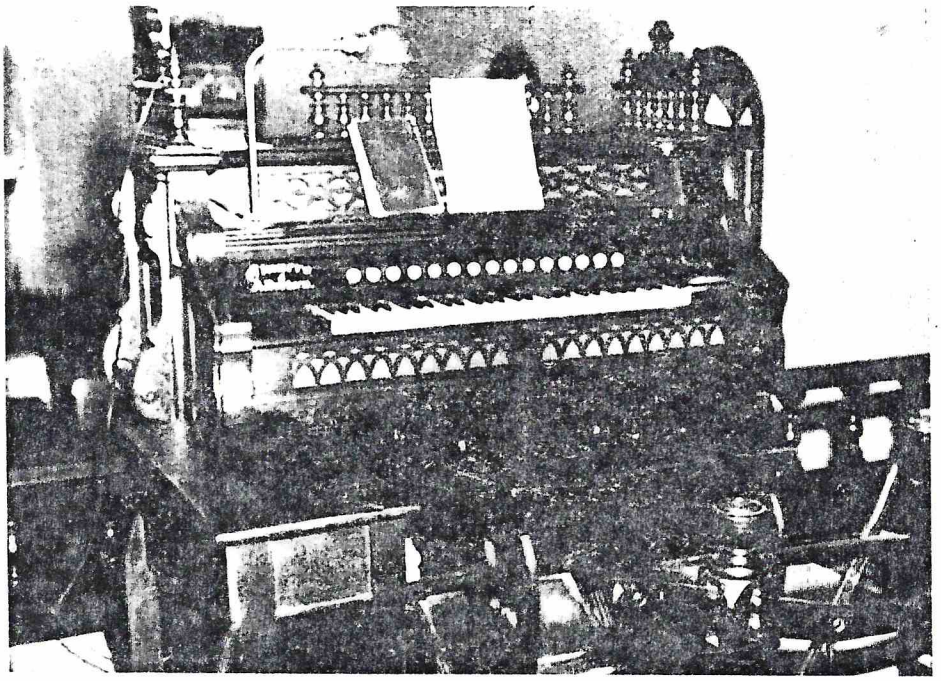
MiCHAEL MAYER

FRED J. BECK

THE ORIGINAL CHURCH AND PARSONAGE



Work on building the church began immediately. Nearly all the labor was donated. The lumber was sawed at one of the member's saw mills. Under the supervision of E. F. Brune, the altar, pulpit and pulpit cover of black walnut were handcarved with a pocket knife, smoothened with a file and sandpapered. The lamb, dove and the Table of the Ten Commandments were handmade as were the baptismal font and the balcony. The Hinners and Albertson reed organ,



the cross, the candelabra and the upstairs pews were brought from Lost Prairie. The bell was purchased in Lenzburg, the downstairs pews in Tennessee, and the windows were hauled from Chester by horses and wagon. The cost of the structure was $1,200.00, not including many donations of material and labor.

The members of the new congregation continued to worship at Lost Prairie until they were granted peaceful release on April 19, 1898. On the same day thirteen charter members with the guidance of Pastor Brust of Horse Prairie, Illinois and Pastor Wisteman of Shiloh Hill, Illinois held an organizational meeting in which they adopted and signed a constitution and elected officers. Pastor E. Beil of Immanuel, Lost Prairie accepted the call of the Neue Dreieinigskeit Gemeinde (New Trinity Congregation) and was installed on May 8, 1898.

REV. W. BRAND

Shortly before Christmas of that year Candidate W. Brand was installed. During his pastorate he received and declined three calls. Finally in April, 1908, he accepted a call to Wisconsin. For the next three and one-half years Rev. W. Schwermann of Immanuel, Lost Prairie, served as vacancy pastor conducting monthly services.

In October, 1911, the Rev. A. H. T. Meier accepted a call from retirement in St. Louis and enjoyed a long and fruitful ministry at Conant.

REV. A. H. T. MEIER

The year 1917 was significant for Trinity joined in celebrating Immanuel's 50th Anniversary. It was also the year of the 400th Anniversary of the German Reformation which Trinity celebrated with other congregations in Steeleville. In the same year anti-German sentiment was high since the United States had entered the First World War. German-speaking people struggled to retain their language and culture without seeming to be anti-American. Accordingly, Trinity resolved in December of 1918 to hold services in English once a month. This marked the beginning of a new and difficult period lasting through the Second World War. The anti-German sentiment, the distance from the homeland, and the English-speaking neighbors all contributed to the necessary change of language. Soon German and English services were held on alternate Sundays. Trinity's constitution and by-laws were translated into English in 1931, but the minutes of voters' meetings were still recorded in German until the following year. German Sunday worship was held twice a month until 1941 when, just two weeks after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and United States involvement in World War II, Trinity's voters resolved in a special meeting "to abandon German services for the duration of this war." (Minutes, p. 130). This resolution virtually ended all German worship.

During Pastor A. H. T. Meier's sixteen years at Conant the congregation celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its formal organization with the annual Mission Festival in May, 1923. The church building was redecorated in commemoration of the event. Later in the same year the members recognized Pastor Meier's fifty years in the ministry. Pastor Meier served four more years and then resigned on account of age and poor hearing. The Rev. A. H. T. Meier's pastorate was the longest in Trinity's history.

During the next two years pastors from Pinckneyville and the Rev. M. Clausen of Lost Prairie provided pastoral services, and student E. Wendling reopened the school and preached for the term 1928-29.

REV. E. WENDLING

REV. C. J. BRODERS

In June, 1929, the Rev. C. J. Broders of Atlanta, Georgia, accepted Trinity's call and was installed in November of 1929. He served four years, but failing health compelled him to resign in the fall of 1932.

The next eight years, 1932-1940, were trying times as Trinity had no full-time pastor. Accordingly, Trinity was served by vacancy Pastors W. Kraft of Lost Prairie (October, 1932 to September, 1933), M. H. Dicke of Pinckneyville (October to November, 1933) and A. Bodtke of Lost Prairie (December, 1933 to September, 1940). Due to the depression during the same years there was a cut-back in calls for ministerial candidates. A number of seminary graduates, then, did not receive calls but were given temporary employment in church work. Trinity employed such candidates to preach and to teach the day school during the eight months of the school year. Men who served were E. Boeschen (1933-35), W. Knoernschild (1935-

E. BOESCHEN

W. KNOERNSCHILD

WILLIAM BORNEMANN

LOUIS CASTENS

37), William Bornemann and Louis Castens (1939-40). During these years Trinity continued to maintain its property. In 1934 members decided to buy and install a new carpet while in 1935 voters commissioned a committee to purchase "the best shingles at the cheapest price," for a new roof on the church building. The pit toilet which today still stands behind the church building was a WPA project in 1936. Trinity rented the vacant parsonage home, while the hired school teachers roomed and boarded with various members of the congregation.

In September of 1940 the Rev. Chalmer Westhoff who had left the ministry because of ill health felt sufficiently recovered to accept Trinitys call for a pastor. A combination of his declining health and the church's insufficient funds compelled him to resign in July, 1942. The Rev. Westhoff was to be the last pastor employed solely by Trinity.

REV. CHALMER WESTHOFF

R. J. RAUBER

For the next two years the Rev. W. J. Hoffmann of Lost Prairie was Trinity's vacancy pastor, while student R. J. Rauber served in the capacity of teacher and minister for the school term 1942-43. In 1944 a concrete porch and steps were built as part of the church's entryway. After Pastor Hoffman accepted a call to Manchester, New Hampshire, late in 1944, the Rev. J. Mueller of Steeleville consented to be vacancy pastor but only until Immanuel of Lost Prairie could obtain a pastor who would be a supply pastor for Trinity.

When the Rev. P. M. Moll came to Lost Prairie in 1945, he did serve as Trinity's supply pastor, and he also taught some of Trinity's children. About this time members resolved that congregational funds be used to pay for coal needed to heat the church. Also, they disposed of the small barn since it was no longer needed.

REV. P. M. MOLL

1948 marked Trinity's golden anniversary from the time of official organization. In preparing to celebrate, members adorned the chancel furniture with new velvet paraments while they redecorated the church and varnished the woodwork of the altar, the pulpit and the pews. Then, on the first Sunday in June, they commemorated the fiftieth anniversary and celebrated the annual Mission Festival with morning and afternoon services. The Rev. W. J. Hoffman, then of Wine Hill and the Rev. G. K. Schmidt of Anna were the guest speakers.

After Pastor Moll's departure to Brussels, Illinois, late in 1948, Pastors Jagels of West Point and J. Mueller of Steeleville assumed pastoral responsibilities until mid-1949.

REV. O. D. MEYER

It was then that Trinity and Immanuel agreed to send a joint call, and Pastor O. D. Meyer accepted the duties of a combined pastorate. For its early years the church building had been lighted by kerosene lamps and later by gas lights, but in 1950 Trinity's members had the church wired for electricity and installed electric lights. When Pastor O. D. Meyer left to do mission work among Mississippi trailer settlements in 1951, the Rev. J. Mueller was again employed as vacancy pastor.

Because of the small number of children, the rising educational standards, and the combined duties of two congregations, the function of teacher was dropped from succeeding calls to pastors. While churches had assumed responsibilities for elementary education in the early years of United States history, gradually state-supported schools took over this responsibility. Since education has always been emphasized in Lutheran tradition, Trinity provided a Christian Day School, taught either by pastors or seminary students until 1943. After this time, Trinity's young children attended public schools, but older ones received special confirmation instruction and pre-high school education in Immanuel's day school. Trinity has continued to provide Sunday School and confirmation instruction until today, although all parochial day school endeavors ceased in 1951.

In 1952 the Rev. Walter Bellman was installed as pastor of both the Conant and Lost Prairie congregations. After serving only eleven months he accepted a call to Onargo, Illinois. For the third time, Pastor Mueller was vacancy pastor, until October of 1953 when Pastor C. Benning began to serve the two churches.

REV. WALTER BELLMAN

REV. C. BENNING

After investigating the cost of a good used organ, the voters decided to repair the existing one and to convert it to use an electric blower. This same organ, now over one hundred years old, is still in use today. Miss Hulda Beck recently completed 40 years as church organist. The present organist is Willard Schaudt.

On February 16, 1954, one month after the church building was reinsured against fire and windstorm for $3,000.00, it was lifted off its foundation by a tornado. Even though the entire building was damaged, the members were able to repair the building, to have it replaced on the existing foundation, and to reinforce the foundation. They also laid a cornerstone on the first Sunday in May with a special service in which the Rev. J. Mueller was guest speaker. The cost of replacing the building on the foundation had been $1,200.00, but the insurance company paid $2,900.00 for damages. In addition, Immanuel of Lost Prairie donated $115.00. Almost the entire amount was used for replastering, repairing and redecorating the building. The women of the congregation purchased a new carpet for the center aisle and the chancel. In the summer of 1955, the steeple was covered with aluminum by Trinity's own men, who were insured against injury for the job. In October of the same year Pastor Benning accepted his second call from Altamont, Illinois. For the next two years, the vacancy was filled by the Rev. Dierks of Du Quoin and the Rev. Stevenson of Pinckneyville.

REV. R. ZIMMERMANN

After eleven men had returned Trinity and Immanuel's call, the Rev. R. Zimmermann accepted it, and he was installed in August, 1957.

With the purchase of a new mimeograph machine Trinity was able to print its revised constitution and to distribute it among the members. In 1960 the members decided to stop using kneeling benches in the communion services and instead to have the communicants stand at the chancel steps. In August, 1963, the Perry County Historical Society held a supper on the church lawn and viewed the handwork of the church furnishings. In the following year Trinity hired a professional to paint the interior of the church and decided to replace the three coal stoves with a gas furnace.

In 1964 Trinity and two other Lutheran congregations in the area conducted self-studies to re-examine their positions as congregations and to ascertain their needs in the future. Under the supervision of Pastor Zimmermann and the Southern Illinois District office, Trinity considered the possibility of a multiple parish with Immanuel, Lost Prairie and Zion, Pinckneyville. During this same year Pastor Zimmermann received three calls. After declining the first two, he accepted the second call from Zion congregation in Hillsboro, Missouri. He preached his farewell sermon January 24, 1965.

At this time pastoral vacancies existed in all three of the congregations. The multiple parish, at first just an idea, developed as Trinity resolved on March 7, 1965 to participate and became a reality one week later when Trinity, Immanuel and Zion Lutheran Congregations signed an agreement uniting them.

REV. CARL HEIDEL

After several calls had been returned, at last seminary graduate Carl Heidel, who in the interim had acted as a supply pastor, was assigned as the only pastor for the multiple parish. He was installed on December 19, 1965.

Not long after the Rev. Heidel's arrival, he began to serve a vacant congregation, Bethel of Du Quoin. Several seminary students (W. Koehler, J. Frerking, C. Conners, and J. Stoeckel) aided Pastor Heidel in leading worship in the four congregations. Shortly after Trinity's sister congregation, Immanuel of Lost Prairie, celebrated her centennial anniversary in 1967, a tornado destroyed the church building. Immanuel congregation eventually dissolved as her members transferred to other Lutheran congregations in the area. Twenty-seven of these members were welcomed into Trinity's membership. Meanwhile in 1968, Bethel Congregation of Du Quoin officially joined the multiple parish now designated Resurrection Lutheran Parish.

Although the congregations cooperate in employing a pastor, each still maintains its own identity and continues as an individual congregation. Trinity sold her parsonage, and it was moved to its present location east of the church grove in 1965. The outside of the church was repainted in 1970, and in 1971 the floors were varnished.

The idea of the multiple parish, so simple on paper, was not so easy to implement. Pastor Heidel, the first pastor in the new situation, made the idea live and endure through drastic change and trying circumstances during the first years. After he accepted a call to Gaylord, Michigan in May, 1970, the Rev. A. Horst of Carbondale was vacancy pastor, and Rev. J. Muhlenbruch was supply pastor.

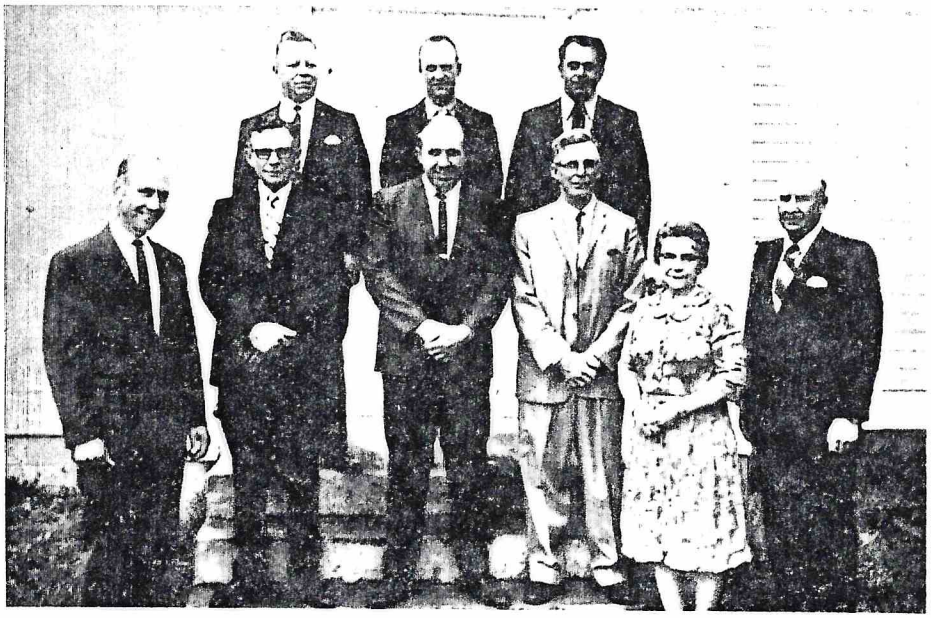
REV. TIM BICKEL

In August, 1971, Candidate Tim Bickel was ordained into the ministry and installed as pastor of Resurrection Lutheran Parish.

For seventy-five years, the Lord has blessed Trinity not with easy times, but with unity of the Spirit and a determination to struggle with difficulties. Trinity looks into the future knowing and trusting the Lord.

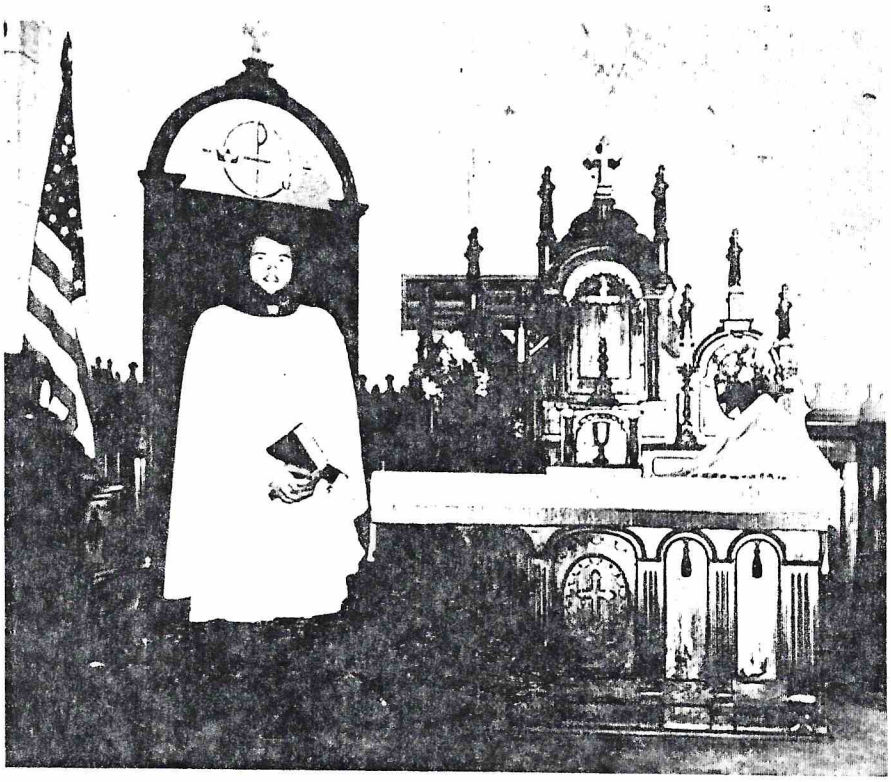
The 75th Anniversary Committee, consisting of Edwin Schrader, Herbert Paasch, Eugene Gielow, Fred Beck, Wm. H. Schrader, Lillian Schaudt, Arthur Beck, Hilda Beck, Rev. and Mrs. Bickel, Linda Brune, Milton Mayer, Mildred Caupert, Flossine Schrader and Nadine Gielow, plans a special occasion to observe this event on August 13, 1972 with two services. Rev. Walter Hoffman of St. Louis will preach the 10:00 A. M. service and Rev. Carl Benning of Stryker, Ohio will be speaker at the 6:00 P. M. service. A basket dinner is planned at noon in the church grove and the afternoon will be spent in social reunion.

PRESENT CHURCH OFFICERS



Left to right, back row: Milton Mayer, Harold Schrader, Eugene Gielow; front row: Wm. T. Schrader, Herbert Paasch, Herman Beck, Martin Schwarz, Eleonora Gielow, Edwin Schrader.

PASTOR BICKEL AT ALTAR



CHILDREN OF CHARTER MEMBERS ATTENDING TRINITY CONGREGATION

Back row, left to right: Louis Brune, Wm. H. Schrader, Arthur Beck, George Beck; front row: Hulda Beck, Fred Beck, Wm. Mayer, Hilda Beck, Theckla Davis, Lillian Schaudt and Freida Beck. Not present was Erhardt Mayer and Martin Mayer.

PRESENT CONGREGATION

1927:
Baptized: Wilma Schrader, Elsa Nimz.
Died: Herman Roethe.

1928:
Baptized: Anita Schaudt, Beulah Mayer, Lorraine Beck.
Died: Augusta Roethe.

1929:
Baptized: William Schrader, George Beck, Jr., May Flossine Caupert, Phyllis Irene Caupert.
Died: Susan Gillis.

1930:
Baptized: Henry Dale Illig.

1931:
Confirmed: Ruth Schaudt, Dale Illig, Konrad Krug.
Baptized: Kenneth Beck, Konrad Krug.

1932:
Baptized: Eugene Gielow.

1933:
Died: A. Frederick Beck, Anna Schaudt.

1934:
Confirmed: Edna Schrader, Lois Schaudt.
Baptized: Harold Schrader.
Died: Caroline Beck.

1935:
Baptized: Eunice Schaudt, Herman Beck.
Died: John F. Brune.

1936:
Confirmed: Gertrude Schrader.
Died: George Brune.

1937:
Confirmed: Lillian Beck, Raymond Beck, Milton Mayer.
Baptized: Maurice Mayer.
Died: Louisa Brune.

1938:
Confirmed: Edwin Schrader.
Baptized: Vernon Mayer.

1939:
Married: None.
Confirmed: None.
Baptized: None.
Died: None.

1940:
Confirmed: Wilma Schrader, Arnold Beck.

1941:
Confirmed: Beulah Mayer, Lorraine Beck, Anita Schaudt.

1942:
Married: Louis Brune to Martha Zinke.
Confirmed: Flossie Caupert, Irene Caupert, William Schrader.

1943:
Baptized: James Davis, Irene Helen Brune.
Died: Carl Caupert, Henry Schrader, Andrew Beck, Irene Brune.

1944:
Married: None.
Confirmed: None.
Baptized: None.
Died: None.

1945:
Married: None.
Confirmed: None.
Baptized: None.
Died: None.

1946:
Confirmed: Eugene Gielow.
1947:
Married: Albert Weaver to Beulah Mayer; Dale Smith to Ruth Schaudt; Oren Smith to Lois Schaudt.
Baptized: Linda Brune.
1948:
Married: Gerhardt Schwarz to Edna Schrader, Edwin Schrader to Flossine Caupert; Edward Wirsing to Irene Caupert.
1949:
Baptized: Joyce Ann Smith.
1950:
Confirmed: Herman Beck.
Baptized: Carol Schrader.
1951:
Confirmed: Maurice Mayer, Vernon Mayer.
Baptized: Thomas Smith, Helen Ann Davis.
Died: Mrs. Bertha Beck.
1952:
Died: Maria Caupert.
1953:
Baptized: Marilyn Beck.
1954:
Married: None.
Confirmed: None.
Baptized: None.
Died: None.
1955:
Baptized: Clifford Schrader, Mark Smith.
Died: Julia Zinke.
1956:
Married: Eugene Gielow to Nadine Stanton.
Baptized: Michael Beck, Ralph Schrader.
1957:
Confirmed: James Howard Davis, James Davis, Mrs. Nadine Gielow, Mrs. Virgina Beck.
Baptized: James Howard Davis, Jean Marie Gielow.
1958:
Died: George Beck, Jr.
1959:
Confirmed: Mr. Theodore Kuhl, Elsie Kuhl, Norman Kuhl.
Baptized: Elaine Gielow, Deborah Ann Huffstutler, Mrs. Elsie Kuhl, Norman Kuhl.
1960:
Married: None.
Confirmed: None.
Baptized: None.
Died: None.
1961:
Confirmed: Linda Brune.
Died: Walter Wagner, William Beck, William Zinke.
1962:
Baptized: Steven Harold Davis.
1963:
Died: Katherine Brune.
1964:
Confirmed: Carol Schrader, Joyce Smith, Helen Ann Davis, Thomas Smith.
1965:
Baptized: Lori Ann Gielow.

1966:
Baptized: James Robert Davis.
Died: Walter Roethe.

1967:
Confirmed: Marilyn Beck.
Died: Theodore H. Schaudt.

1968:
Baptized: Eric Paul Heidel.

1969:
Married: Harold Lieurance to Eunice Schaudt.
Confirmed: Mike Beck, Ralph Schrader, Clifford Schrader, Mark Smith.

1970:
Died: Lydia Zinke, William Schaudt.

1971:
Married: Paul Pyatt to Joyce Ann Smith.
Confirmed: Jean Marie Gielow.
Died: Ernest Brune, Theodore Beck, Adolph Beck.

1972:
Married:
Confirmed:
Baptized:
Died: Edward Roethe.

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